**THE MERCHANT AND THE KNIGHT – CHARACTERIZATION ANALYSIS**

The object of the present work is to analyse, therefore compare, the Merchant and the Knight’s characterization by Geoffrey Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales.

The present work will discuss the differences and the similarities of the structure of the two characterizations.

An analysis of both characterization will be first provided, on a second moment singular elements will be considered to pinpoint differences and similarities.

The most important strategy used to characterize the Knight is reputation. Indeed, right from the first line, the Knight’s value as a gentlemen is highlighted with the noun “gentlemen” put in a key position at the end of the first line. Furthermore, the repetition of the word “worth” connotes his worthiness and pictures him as the embodiment of the knights’ ideal, indeed he loves “chivalry”, “truth”, “honour”, “freedom” and “courtesy”,

The description reaches the climax at the end of the text with the line “he was a truly perfect, noble knight”, indeed the caesura marked by the comma underlines both the qualities “truly perfect” and “noble”.

The circular structure focuses the reader’s attention on the concept making him understand its importance in the characterization.

The Knight is pictured as a worthy man both for what concerns the king, “full worthy was he in his sovereign’s war”, and religion, “as well is Christendom as heathenesse”. Hence, it is important to note that religious values were the most important in the Middle Ages as they regulated social classes.

Indeed, despite the central part of the characterization, where the principal strategy is the knight’s religious battles organized into a climatic structure of juxtapositions of battles, the characterization ends with the Knight going on pilgrimage. As a result his religious values are once more underlined.

Thus far the reader understands that the Knight is the embodiment of the most appreciated values in the Middle Ages, such as: chivalry, truth, honour, freedom, courtesy and humility.

Humility is a key concept of the present work. Indeed, while the Knight’s humility is put into focus at the end of the text: by the expressions “temper as meekly as a maid”, “he never yet had any vileness said”, highlighted by the absolute negation “never yet had any”, the expression “in all his life” which acquires a superlative meaning and the alliteration of sound “w”, “whatsoever weight” and by his dressing style, “he was not gaily dressed”, “simple cloth he possessed”, “discoloured and stained”; instead, the Merchant is characterized by an eccentric aura that seems the exact opposite of the Knight’s humility.

The most important strategy used to characterize the Merchant is irony, which is a figure of speech used to express a concept through its exact opposite. Irony is then expanded to a series of sub-strategies, such as: social status; physical description; body language; dressing style; way of speaking; affected appearance.

His dressing style: “motley dress”, “Flemish beaver hat”, “buckled boots”; his body language: “high on his horse he sat”; along with his way of speaking: “in solemn tones, he harped on his increase”; all suggest a particular care towards his appearance.

Indeed, before reading the last part of the text, the reader pictures the Merchant as a rich person, but his interpretation is soon proved wrong by the narrator’s statement: “none knew he was in debt”.

At this point the irony is clear and the Merchant is pictured as an affected person, who valuates appearance above being.

In conclusion, while the Knight’s is characterized with absolute transparency and is the embodiment of the most important moral values of the Middle Ages, the Merchant is characterized by an aura of falseness.